



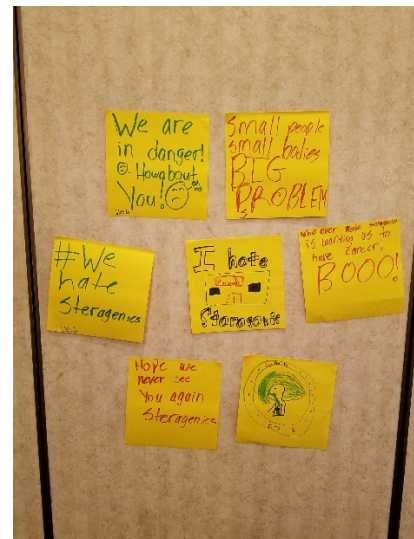
Synopsis & Evaluation Willowbrook Community Meeting on Ethylene Oxide November 29, 2018

Overview & Summary of Open House and Community Meeting

Willowbrook, Illinois is home to the medical sterilization company Sterigenics, which uses the chemical ethylene oxide in its processes. Ethylene oxide, or EtO, has been emitted in the air from this facility for many years and has become the subject of extreme community concern since the chemical was listed as a known carcinogen in 2016. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has been working with community leaders and groups to understand and address their concerns, and this public meeting was designed as a forum for answering as many questions as possible at this stage of study and analysis of the problem. The local group Stop Sterigenics was especially involved in event planning and in helping to design and guide the meeting.

The community meeting was held on Thursday, November 29, 2018 at Ashton Place banquet hall in Willowbrook, Illinois from 7:00 to 10:00 pm. An open house was set up at the same facility before the meeting from 3:00 to 6:00 pm. These events together were meant to provide participants with all available information about the issue, to hear their concerns, to answer questions, and to explore further opportunities for community engagement.

The open house was attended by about 200 people who were able to talk with federal, state, and local agency representatives about the various aspects of the EtO studies.





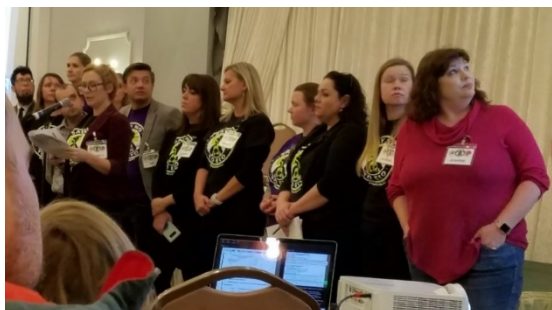
The open house stations and staffing included the following.

Topic Area	Table Staffing
National Air Toxics Assessment (NATA) Risk Assessment & Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) Report	USEPA & ATSDR
Emissions Measurement, Monitoring and Modeling - Current fieldwork, sampling schedule, how a summa canister works	USEPA & EPA Region 5
Pediatric Health Issues	Great Lakes Center for Children's Environmental Health & EPA Region 5 Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit
Emergency Response & Fire Prevention	Tri State Fire Department
State Environmental and Regulatory Issues	Illinois EPA & Illinois Attorney General
Constituency Concerns	U.S. Representative Daniel Lipinski office
Let's Talk – Open Discussion	USEPA
Outreach and Information - Resource materials factsheets, websites, handouts, timelines	EPA Region 5
Got Questions? – Submit questions for public meeting and EtO.gov mailbox	EPA Region 5
Stay Informed - Sign up for email notifications on future engagement opportunities	EPA Region 5
Community Grassroots Activities	Stop Sterigenics
Concerned Citizens/Outreach/Research	EtO Research and Response



In addition to talking with agency staff about specific aspects of the EtO issue, quite a few people took advantage of speaking one-on-one with EPA representatives about their questions and concerns. Local interest groups and activist organizations also hosted tables to talk with attendees. People were able to sign up with EPA using their e-mail addresses to receive future information and notifications of participation opportunities.

The larger group meeting room was able to accommodate approximately 700 people who attended the evening event, which combined short presentations with question-and-answer sessions conducted by both community representatives and agency technical experts. Security was provided by local law enforcement agencies, but no untoward events occurred. The meeting was covered by several media outlets and was live-streamed on the Village of Willowbrook's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/VillageofWillowbrook/> for those unable or who preferred not to attend. This recording remains available to the public.



The meeting agenda follows:



AGENDA

Community Forum on Ethylene Oxide November 29, 2018

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING:

This meeting is designed around the questions being asked by communities surrounding the Sterigenics facility in Willowbrook Illinois.

Staff from U.S. EPA, the State of Illinois, and the Tri-State Fire Department will provide answers and information in response to community questions received regarding EtO and what is known and not known about the specific conditions and risks at the Willowbrook Sterigenics facility.

The U.S. EPA will also discuss ongoing activities and a timeline regarding sampling and evaluation of the contamination levels and risks for the Willowbrook community and plans for on-going community information and engagement.

7:00 PM Introduction to Tonight's Forum

- How the meeting was designed and will work
- What we hope to achieve
- How we hope to inform everyone tonight and engage the community moving forward
- What we ask from you to ensure everyone gets the information they desire

7:10 PM Welcome and Commitment

- Village of Willowbrook
- US EPA Region 5 – Jim Payne, Deputy Regional Administrator
- US EPA – William Wehrum, Assistant Administrator for the Office of Air and Radiation
- US Representative Daniel Lipinski

7:35 PM Community Statement

- Stop Sterigenics Group - Neringa Zymancius and Others

7:45 PM Setting the Stage: Past, Current and Future Activities to Understand Ethylene Oxide Emissions in Willowbrook, IL

- US EPA – Mike Koerber, Deputy Office Director, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards (OAQPS)



8:00 PM Panel Session 1. *Community questions related to ethylene oxide and what we know and don't know about the risks around the Sterigenics facilities*

Community Questioners:

- Mayor Tom Hinshaw, Village of Indian Head Park
- Urszula Tanouye, Stop Sterigenics Group

Panelists:

- US EPA – Kelly Rimer, Leader, Air Toxics Assessment Group, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards (OAQPS)
- US EPA – Mike Koerber, Deputy Office Director, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards (OAQPS)

8:30 PM Panel Session 2. *Community questions related to the Sterigenics Willowbrook facility*

Community Questioners:

- Sri Rao, Stop Sterigenics Group
- John Wawak, Stop Sterigenics Group

Panelists:

- Tri-State Fire Department –Sam Molinaro, Chief & Patrick Brenn, Deputy Chief
- US EPA – Mike Koerber, Deputy Office Director, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards (OAQPS)
- Illinois EPA – Alec Messina, Director

9:00 PM Panel Session 3. *Community questions related to future plans to inform and engage the community surrounding the Sterigenics Willowbrook facility*

Community Questioners:

- Mayor Tom Hinshaw, Village of Indian Head Park
- Margaret Donnell, Stop Sterigenics Group

Panelists:

- US EPA – Laura McKelvey, Leader, Community and Tribal Programs Group, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards (OAQPS)
- Illinois EPA – Alec Messina, Director

9:30 PM Address Additional Questions. *Community and Local Government Questioners will ask panelists to address additional questions collected from the question cards throughout the Open House and Forum.*

9:55 – 10:00 PM Closing Remarks

- US EPA – William Wehrum, Assistant Administrator for the Office of Air and Radiation



Key Public Issues

There is a significant amount of outrage within the Willowbrook and surrounding communities stemming from ethylene oxide air emissions from the Sterigenics facility. Although the plant has been operating at this location for more than 30 years, it was only recently (2016) that EtO was found to be a known human carcinogen. Community residents, leaders, and elected officials at the local and state levels have become increasingly concerned about the health effects – past, present, and future – of these emissions.

There are strong perceptions that the EPA and State of Illinois responsible officials have been ‘dragging their feet’ on undertaking and completing air quality monitoring and public health studies. This has resulted in demands to shut down the Sterigenics facility. Community opposition groups have formed around this issue, chief among which is *Stop Sterigenics*, whose members are organized, active and vocal in pressing EPA for data, answers, and action. The level of media attention to the Willowbrook situation has served to ignite concerns in surrounding and other communities that host similar facilities.

Key Event Planning Issues

This was the second community meeting held in 2018 by EPA in Willowbrook to address the EtO concerns. The first, in August, was similar to this event in structure – a large public meeting with expert agency presenters and public questions and comments. This meeting was scheduled largely to fulfill EPA’s commitment to return to the community with answers to some of their questions and updates on air monitoring studies. In fact, very little additional information was available by the time of the event, prompting concerns among organizing officials that they would not be able to adequately respond to community issues and that this could increase people’s levels of anger and anxiety. Once EPA had committed to a date for this second public meeting, they were reluctant to change it even though many issues were unresolved, and this created an extremely short and hectic planning timeframe, particularly since it occurred over the Thanksgiving holiday.

Given that a very large number of attendees was expected, upwards of 1000 people, a key challenge was designing a meeting in which community concerns could be expressed and addressed in a manageable way within reasonable timeframes. The main way this was approached was to collaborate with community stakeholders in event planning from the earliest stages, and to request that community leaders and residents ask the questions at the public meeting that were thought to be representative of the larger body of public concerns, as gathered from hundreds of communications with EPA and a Facebook page managed by Stop Sterigenics. At the meeting, the questions were asked by ‘panels’ made up of volunteer elected officials and respected community residents. Late in event planning, an afternoon open house was also added as a way to allow more people to voice their comments and gain information.



Lessons Learned for the Future

1. Decide on clear objectives for public outreach activities and design events to achieve objectives. There are many alternatives to large open public meetings, depending on objectives. Let participants know in advance what to expect and not to expect, if possible.
2. Be flexible on event scheduling and format to ensure that objectives and expectations can be met. In this case, a commitment to a certain date caused many challenges when anticipated meeting content was not available. The meeting format and logistical constraints were not optimal for the objective of "listening to the public".
3. Leave sufficient planning time before events, particularly for large logistically-complicated events. Set reasonable schedules for preparation of meeting materials and establish completion deadlines to avoid last-minute changes and anxiety. Give presenters sufficient time to prepare and schedule travel.
4. When trying to summarize or categorize large amounts of public comments and input in advance of an event, develop a plan of action, assign primary responsibility to a single 'interpreter', and leave sufficient time for research and analysis.
5. Make time for speaker briefings and preparation, and conduct a 'dry run' of the event to anticipate problems and adjustments.
6. Advance work with key stakeholders was critical to the success of this event and should be used as a model for similar situations in future.
7. Community members/leaders and independent 'experts' may be viewed as more credible than agency staff. Inviting such people to serve key roles in this meeting proved to be highly valuable, and a similar approach should be taken in future whenever possible.
8. EPA worked exceptionally hard to be transparent in its approach to this controversial topic, and this work resulted in a higher level of public trust than might have been expected given the significance and intensity of public concerns before this event.
9. Several of the meeting speakers were put in a position of having to say they did not know answers to community questions. Being open and honest about this, coupled with promises to find answers in future and share them timely, turned this potentially-negative situation into another opportunity to enhance public trust.

Next Steps

EPA has committed to future outreach activities, such as single-topic webinars, aimed at providing additional and timely information to the community. These follow-on actions should serve to foster the trust begun between the community and the agency. In future, it might be an effective strategy to reverse the sequence of public events so that the targeted information-dissemination activities occur before public gatherings, so that participants feel more informed and less skeptical of the agency's motives and actions.

Suggestions for Future EtO Community Engagement



The Willowbrook experience has provided insights into what worked well and what could be improved in future community outreach efforts in other communities affected by EtO emissions. Using the lessons learned from Willowbrook, EPA can develop a strategic approach for hearing and addressing community concerns that:

- Allows the agency to predict what public concerns might be
- Recognizes the need for flexibility in developing public participation approaches
- Provides sufficient time to elicit and evaluate public concerns
- Allows for development of data, information, and actions designed to address significant public concerns
- Creates effective platforms for engagement that can be used in multiple locations
- Evaluates overall and site-specific funding/budget needs
- Builds in-house capacity at staff and management levels to address the issue of EtO on a broad scale
- Provides mechanisms for identifying and collaborating with local stakeholders and community leaders to foster transparency, trust, and implementable solutions